

Former CIA agent says public deceived

STAT

By BARRY BORTNICK
Times Call Boulder Bureau

BOULDER — After 25 years with the CIA Ralph McGehee couldn't take the lies any longer.

McGehee, 57, left the agency in 1977 and later won a legal battle to have his book, "Deadly Deceits: My 25 Years In The CIA," published. McGehee will speak about his CIA years Monday night at the University of Colorado.

In a Wednesday telephone interview from his home in Herndon, Va. the highly-decorated former agent stated the CIA is no more than a paramilitary organization aimed at using disinformation and covert action to enforce government policy. McGehee added that the misinformation and violent campaign carried out by the agency in Vietnam is currently taking place in Central America.

It was during his Vietnam service, from 1968 to 1970 — where he worked as liaison between the CIA and the South Vietnamese special police — that McGehee realized the American public was duped by government officials who deliberately concealed the truth about communist support throughout Vietnam. "When I went to Vietnam I went to save the world for democracy and religion," McGehee said. "But when I left I was a harsh critic. The CIA was lying deliberately about the communist movement in Vietnam. If the truth had been told it would have been obvious that America was the invading force and the only decision possible would have been to withdraw."

McGehee said truthful intelligent reports were often ignored in Vietnam while false ones were given top priority because they reflected U.S. policy. "If you had an intelligence report that indicated the communists had low morale, it would get out immediately," McGehee said. "But if you had information that the morale of communist forces was high you could never get it out."

McGehee said that after witnessing one too many napalm bombs fall on one too many innocents, he began to speak up about the CIA's role in Vietnam, but soon he was shifted out of Vietnam and

shunned until he took early retirement.

Although he looks at his years of service with sadness, McGehee now considers himself a useful insider who can spread the word about the terrible realities of his covert brethren. "It makes me feel very bad to have been part of it," McGehee said. "But I was deceived as much as anyone else and at the time I felt I was saving the world. Now that I have gone through that agony I can be a credible spokesman for the reality of the CIA."

McGehee said CIA is not an intelligence-gathering organization, but a covert body enforcing policies that benefits corporate America — an organization that is designed to overthrow governments that stand in the way of profits. What little intelligence is actually gathered by the CIA, McGehee said, is altered to suit the government's current need — whether it be an excuse to invade Grenada or a reason to send military aid to the contras in Nicaragua.

"In Vietnam reality stood on its ear," McGehee said. "I am sure this is happening in Nicaragua today."

McGehee said the 1983 Grenada invasion was a perfect example of how CIA disinformation was shaped to suit the president's needs. "It was absurd," McGehee said.

McGehee said the CIA fabricated evidence to support the invasion by claiming the Caribbean island was used to stockpile weapons as a means to export aggression through the region. However, McGehee added, when the national press arrived on the island — after the Reagan administration kept the media away for several days — only a small number of weapons were found. McGehee believes the weapons were not stockpiled by communists, but were planted by the CIA to sell the invasion to America.

"Misinformation is a standard technique," McGehee said. "Wherever the focus lands is where you see misinformation at its greatest."

According to McGehee, the current focus is Central America, where McGehee fears his old team is up to more dirty tricks as it spreads lies to legitimize

American support of the contras. "I have been to Nicaragua and the contras are not freedom fighters," McGehee said. "They are former members of (long-time Nicaraguan strongman Anastasio) Somoza's guards who were the most brutal police force under one of the most brutal governments in Central America. They are mercenaries who would fade away without American support. The Sandinistas have the backing of the people, but we (the U. S. government) are, by our own policies, pushing them toward the Soviet."

Although McGehee is critical of the CIA, he sees hope as more people understand the realities of America's might. "The American people can do things," he said. "People took action in Vietnam and we got out. It took us 10 years to understand what was happening there, but in Nicaragua the protests started immediately. If people knew the truth they would opt for compassion and democracy, but they are so deceived."

McGehee will speak at CU's Glenn Miller Ballroom at 7:30 p.m. Monday night.